New York
Theatre Critics' Reviews
1945

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"The Day Before Spring"

The Sun

NOVEMBER 23, 1945

'The Day Before Spring,' Pleasant Show—Nice Music and Attractive Cast.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

John C. Wilson, not having given the town a musical show since the successful "Bloomer Girl," now obliges with a pleasant and generally likable piece called "The Day Before Spring," which took over last evening at the National. It offers attractive principals, some nice music and a humorless but serviceable book.

There is a good deal of style to the new Wilson production. Frederick Loewe's songs are well done and the intrusion of the inevitable ballet numbers bothered me a little less than usual. Alan Jay Lerner's book becomes somewhat overpowering at times, but the production has the advantage of the presence of such people as Irene Manning, Bill Johnson and John Archer.

Miss Manning sings charmingly in the role of a restless ten-year wife who seeks to recapture an old love. John Archer makes the transition to the song-and-dance stage without loss of his engaging ways, and Bill Johnson still knows how to come through with a song, as he so well demonstrated in "Something for the Boys."

"The Day Before Spring" presents a triangle story. It's that of Katherine and Peter, married for a decade, and the dashing Alex, world-traveler and author, with whom Katherine tried to elope in her college years. As they meet again at their class reunion, she again comes under Alex's spell. They try another elopement, but their car breaks down, as it did on their first attempt, and when Peter intervenes his pretty runaway wife decides against her romantic yearnings.

The device of blending story with song works rather successfully in "The Day Before Spring," although I could well do without the pretentiousness of the number in which the wavering Katherine receives advice from Freud, Plato and Voltaire. Loewe's music comes along delightfully at times, and often when it is needed, and Lerner's lyrics are good enough. There are some particularly pleasant songs—"God's Green World," "My Love Is A Married Man," "You Haven't Changed at All," "Friends to the End," "I Love You This Morning."

In the subordinate roles, the good-looking Patricia Marshall is as attractive as she is uninhibited, and Tom Helmore is droll and amusing. The collegiate backgrounds are exceptionally well done in the settings of Robert Davison. The Miles White costumes are as imaginative as always. Maurice Abravanel is the musical director.

"The Day Before Spring" isn't the musical show of the year but it is an agreeable production, it is done with excellent taste, and it confirms a growing impression that John C. Wilson has definite talent for this type of entertainment.

'THE DAY BEFORE SPRING.'

Musical comedy, with book and lyrics by Alan Lerner; music by Frederick Loewe; book directed by Edward Padula; orchestration by Harold Byrns; musical director, Maurice Abravanel; costumes by Miles White; production staged by John C. Wilson; settings by Robert Davison; ballets and musical ensembles by Anthony Tudor; presented by John C. Wilson at the National Theater, Thursday, November 22, 1945. The cast:

Katherine Townsend	Irene Manning
Peter Townsend	John Archer
Bill Tompkins	Bert Freed
May Tompkins	Lucille Benson
Alex Maitland	Bill Johnson
Maria	Karel Lorraine
Lucille	Betts Anderson
Leonore	Lucille Fleetman
Marjorie	Estelle Loring
Susan	Arlouine Goodjohn
Anne	Betty Jean Smythe
Gerald Barker	Tom Helmore
Joe McDonald	Don Mayo
Harry Scott	Robert Field
Eddie Warren	Dwight Marfield
Christopher Randolph	Patricia Marshall
Katherine	Mary Ellen Moylan
Alex	Hugh Laing
Voltaire	Paul Best
Plato	Ralph Glover
Freud	Hermann Leopold

DAILY NEWS

NOVEMBER 23, 1945

'Day Before Spring' a Melodious, Smart and Beguiling Musical Play

By JOHN CHAPMAN

John C. Wilson's new musical, "The Day Before Spring," is refreshing as a June breeze—and urbane, humorous, tuneful and performed by a set of principals who have not only the will to entertain but also the know-how. Last night's holidaying first-nighters gave it the thanks of the season.

Alan Jay Lerner has contrived several song lyrics much better than average and a plot involving a tenth-year college reunion which is interesting, integrated and full of pleasant surprises. Frederick Lowe has composed a generous and beguiling score. And Bill Johnson, Irene Manning, Patricia Marshall and John Archer are among the most pleasant companions imaginable.

The locale is the slightly mythical college town of Harrison, where the class of '35 has come for a reunion. Here arrive Miss Manning and her nice, sensible husband, Mr. Archer—and here, too, arrives Mr. Johnson, a virile version of the Richard Halliburton type of roving author.

Once, ten years ago, Miss Manning eloped with Mr. Johnson, who had filled her up with stuff about living life in God's green world—but about 10 miles out of town the car broke down and so did the elopement. Mr. Archer rescued the stranded couple and married the girl.

The author went authing all over the world, and he wrote one book, "The Day Before Spring," which is the story of what ecstasies might have happened had the elopement jalopy not broken down. It gets Miss Manning, so when she meets her old heart-throb at the reunion she elopes with him all over again.

Politely Sexy.

It is a clever, politely sexy plot, which jabs intelligently and good-humoredly at authors, class reunions and other human mistakes and which has been given some delightful twists—such as the scene in which Miss Manning, trying to make up her mind whether to leave her husband or stay with him, is offered three kinds of advice by three campus statues of Plato, Voltaire and Freud.

Mr. Lowe's score is not only pleasant to take, but also unusually varied. It, too, has moments of wit, with an outdoor song ("God's Green World") that is rousing yet amusing, a college song ("Friends to the End") which makes laughs with a male chorus, and a very funny musical setting for Omar Khayam's "A jug of wine, a loaf of bread and thou—baby." Harold Byrns' orchestrations and Maurice Abravanel's conducting keep the music vibrant.

Miss Manning, of the movies—she was superb in the superb "Yankee Doodle Dandy"—is lovely on the stage and beautifully dressed, and she sings quite well. Mr. Johnson, as the author, is the best romantic baritone I have heard in a long, long time. Miss Marshall, who has the luck to get the "Jug of Wine" song, is a hot little darling who has been cooling off in ice shows for a couple of years, and I'm glad Mr. Wilson found her.

There are some good dance ensembles directed by Antony Tudor, and, although one ballet is pretty dull even with Mary Ellen Moylan and Hugh Laing in it, the staging of a number titled "I Love You This Morning" is extraordinarily fine. Robert Davison's sets are nice but not gaudy and Miles White's costumes are all right, too.

Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

New York Post

NOVEMBER 23, 1945

'The Day Before Spring' A Tedious College Reunion

By Wilella Waldorf

John C. Wilson's latest musical production, "The Day Before Spring," revealed last night at the National Theatre, has a pleasant, if hardly exciting, score by Frederick Loewe, but the book by Alan Jay Lerner is a curious mixture of pseudo-sophisticated marital philosophy and the sort of collegiate comedy that might grace a Junior Show. Viewed as an evening's entertainment on Broadway, we found it on the tedious side.

It all goes on during a college reunion at dear old Harrison. Peter Townsend and his wife, Katherine, both went there ten years back. In fact Katherine was about to elope with Alex Maitland when Peter stepped in and cut him out.

Now Alex has become a writer of romantic novels and his latest book, "The Day Before Spring" tells the story of what might have happened if the elopement had gone on as scheduled. As a husband Peter has become a trifle casual and Katherine is all set for a bit of a fling. So, it appears, is Alex, who proposes that they really run away this time, Peter or no Peter.

Katherine is in terrible dilemma, which is, of course, the cue for an Antony Tudor ballet, in fact, two Antony Tudor ballets, neither of them top Tudor, even with Hugh Laing dancing. Furthermore, she visits the college library to meditate on the matter and is variously advised by statues of Plato, Voltaire and Freud. It was at moments like these that Mr. Lerner's lyrics sported an especially undergraduate flavor.

To Bill Johnson as the novelist fell most of the evening's singing and he did it with virility, even occasionally giving an impression that he had confused the occasion with a revival of "The Vagabond King." Irene Manning also sang capably enough, but with less verve, and often seemed as uninterested in the proceedings as we were, for which we can hardly blame her.

John Archer, a "straight" actor, gave his usual easy performance in the husband's role, a thankless task indeed, and Bert Freed was somewhere around among the alumni. Mr. Freed is a good comedian but "The Day Before Spring" offers him little or no opportunity to show it.

Purely incidental—he wasn't even an old Harrisonian—an English actor named Tom Helmore drew the best lines and made even the lesser of them sound amazingly diverting. After the performance had been going on for a while we began to watch for Mr. Helmore and more until finally we took to wishing everybody else would stay away and let him star in—another show. He seemed curiously detached from this one, but oh, how welcome!

Maurice Abravanel did a good job with a good orchestra and if Miles White, the costume designer, really knows what the co-eds are wearing this season, American campuses must look more peculiar than ever.

New York World-Telegram

NOVEMBER 23, 1945

By Burton Rascoe

'The Day Before Spring' a Beautiful Operetta

The only trouble with the new musical, "The Day Before Spring," which John C. Wilson presented with loving care at the National last night, is that very soon (I predict) it is going to be very difficult to get tickets for it, unless one is willing to purchase seats far in advance.

For "The Day Before Spring" is a sweet and charming musical that has everything an operetta, American style, should possess. It has a book by Albert Jay Lerner that has substance, wit and point. The lyrics, also by Mr. Lerner, are an integral part of the story, not just songs stuck with no relation to the text; and these lyrics are as clean as fresh snow on a hillside and almost as brilliantly textured as snow crystals.

The music by Frederick Lowe (orchestrations by Harold Byrns) gives evidence that the author and composer have worked with that harmony in creative collaboration that has distinguished the work of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein 2nd. There are eight hit songs in the show—five of them romantic and haunting in melody and three of them very witty and amusing—and each of these songs grows out of the character or characters and the situation. Maurice Abravanel directs the orchestra as though he had written the music himself.

First Rate Cast.

The cast is impeccable from the five romantic principals in a love triangle, with tangents—Irene Manning, Bill Johnson, John Archer, Patricia Marshall and Tom Helmore—to such bit players and singers as Dwight Marfield, Hermann Leopoldi, Karol Loraine, Bette Anderson, Lucille Floetman, Estelle Loring, Arlouine Goodjohn and Betty Jean Smyth.

Mr. Helmore, just released from the RAF Transport Command, is a suave and personable comedian, last seen here in "No Time for Comedy." His return is a cause for rejoicing.

Anthony Tudor has created two superb ballets portraying dream fantasies, one the very essence of a nightmare. They are danced to perfection by Hugh Laing, Mary Ellen Moylan and corps de ballet. Mr. Wilson, the producer-director, has not permitted the ballet to throw the show out of kilter. The two ballets are an integral part of the narrative.

Story of Operetta.

The operetta tells of the desire of Katherine Townsend (Miss Manning) to see Alex Maitland, a popular novelist (Mr. Johnson), after 10 years of marriage to Peter Townsend (Mr. Archer). She has read one of Maitland's novels in which he has used an incident involving them when they were both in college and when she was in love with him. He has made her the heroine of the novel, imagining what their life would have been like if a car hadn't broken down and they had not been picked up by Peter, to whom she switched her love.

Ten years of happy marriage and Alex's silly book have given her a romantic desire to recapture her youth. Alex is quick to revive the spark with the song, "You Haven't Changed At All." He proposes they re-enact their disrupted elopement of 10 years ago, but go through with it this time. Meanwhile, there is a very funny fantasy in which three statues come to life in the library, where Katherine seeks advice. Plato advises her to keep her love platonic, Voltaire to eat her cake and have it too, and Freud to drop her inhibitions and run away with her lover.

Brilliant New Addition.

The history of this love triangle repeats itself, and Katherine regains her senses, but not until Miss Marshall has just about made Peter succumb to her own lack of inhibitions. This Miss Marshall is a sort of youthful Myrna Loy in looks and sings like an angel; she arouses the domestic instincts in Mr. Helmore, who is secretary and valet to Mr. Johnson, and he aids and abets in returning Miss Manning to Mr. Archer so he can propose marriage to Miss Marshall.

It is all exquisitely and tastefully done, including a musical number, "Friend to the End," satirizing the drunken songfests when old classmates reunite on the campus, sung by Bert Freed, Don Mayo, Robert Field, Mr. Marfield and alumni. The other comic hits are "My Love Is a Married Man" and "A Jug of Wine," both sung by Miss Marshall. The theme song is the title of Maitland's book, "The Day Before Spring." . . . A brilliant new addition to American operettas.

PM EXCLUSIVE

NOVEMBER 23, 1945

—*Kronenberger*—

About A Week Before Spring

PM Reviews

Most musicals this season having been exercises in torture, the temptation is to seize on the good points and even better intentions of *The Day Before Spring* and declare the show a mild sort of blessing. But since relative merit is an ambiguous criterion, the temptation must be resisted. *The Day Before Spring* tries hard to be a lot of very nice things, but only succeeds in being a few of them. It strove for good taste and achieved it. It went after likeable personalities, and for the most part found them. It wanted to look nice and it does. It put a proper stress on music; and the music, if not too original, is buoyant and bright and very well orchestrated.

But in spite of these merits, the show winds up a pretty long way from home. To bypass its individual shortcomings to get at its over-all weakness, I think *The Day Before Spring* never really achieves the freshness prinked with sophistication that it very palpably goes after. Such a combination (which worked last season, on very different lines, in *On the Town*) is obviously the very devil to come by. Here the combination fails because, too often, what's meant to seem fresh only manages to seem forced; and because what's meant to be a trifle sophisticated winds up more than a trifle pretentious. To its credit, *The Day Before Spring* didn't want the usual breezy tone of a Broadway musical, or the usual comedy. But instead of a gay informality of tone, it has a muddled air; and instead of something like real wit, it has only an immature cleverness. Even after deducting 10 per cent of my objections for turkey and plum pudding, I still think *The Day Before Spring* is too seldom exhilarating.

The book, for another thing, rather gets in your hair. It has to do with a young married woman who meets an old flame at a college reunion. He has written a novel of which she is the glamorous heroine and, flattered into new romantic emotions, she agrees to run away with him. For a musical comedy, the story has a certain compactness; but that, in the end, is the trouble with it. For *The Day Before Spring* hammers away at it, verbally as well as vocally, all evening, with little time out for anything else. Plainly, the show might have had a lot more fun with the reunion itself, but it didn't seem to want to.

Another of the show's weaknesses, for me, is Mr. Tudor's two ballets. Beyond being done in a style that seems decidedly wrong for Broadway, they seemed anything but distinguished examples of that style; fussy without being expressive, and empty even of purely choreographic rewards. I got neither fun nor excitement from either ballet, though the second was somewhat better than the first.

It is Mr. Loewe's music that gives the show most of its lift. Irene Manning and Bill Johnson sing the nicely schmaltzy romantic tunes quite well; and Patricia Marshall, a gal with a lively, taking personality has two pleasant lighter numbers. And for John Archer there's a very amusing buzz of a ditty called *Where's My Wife?* All these people are pleasant, and Tom Helmore is very much of an asset in a smaller role. Mary Ellen Moylan and Hugh Laing handle the dancing, she the more attractively. Some of Robert Davison's sets are attractive and so are some of Miles White's costumes. *The Day Before Spring* has a nice look and a nice spirit; but it doesn't jell into a real evening's entertainment. —LOUIS KRONENBERGER

Journal and American

NOVEMBER 23, 1945.

'Day Before Spring' Buds at the National

By ROBERT GARLAND

Last night, which, inside the National Theatre, was the night on which to be thankful, John Wilson presented "The Day Before Spring." A "new musical" with book and lyrics by Alan Lerner and score by Frederick Loewe, the settings were by Robert Davidson, the costumes were by Miles White, the ballets and ensembles were by Anthony Tudor.

There's something fresh, delightfully disarming, about this young brother to "Bloomer Girl," getting to be a big sister now around at the Shubert Theatre. Suppose the lyrics are better than the book and the music is better than the lyrics; suppose the settings are better than the ballets and the costumes are better than the settings.

Comparisons still are odorous. So suffice it to report that Thanksgiving night's arrival in 41st st. is a welcome addition to the town's top musicals, an adult and affable, slick and showy, gay and gracious, literate and sometimes laughable song-and-dance show to take its place among Broadway's brighter extravaganzas.

Highbrow Lowlifes

Imagine a song-and-dance show with Plato, Voltaire and Freud among its characters. Well, these highbrow lowlifes are part and parcel of "The Day Before Spring." Stepping down from their plaster pedestals, they advise the sorely beset heroine as to what and what not to do. Plato's advice is strictly Platonic, Voltaire's is strictly French.

But, as you'd know, Freud's is strictly Freudian. Taking the neurologist at his psychoanalytical lyric, Katherine Townsend leaves her doting husband, Peter, for the Alexander Maitland who is a novelist, a lady-killer and a bad but attractive young gentleman with bad but attractive old ideas. Incognito, Freud goes with them.

Everything being for the best in the best of all song-and-dance worlds, Katherine, something of a beautiful-but-dumbbell, sees the error of her Freudian ways. In time for the final curtain, she says "No" to her boy-friend, "Yes" to her husband and reprises the piece's title-song for a fifth or seventh time.

Somewhat Different

That title song, this "The Day Before Spring," is almost as delightful and derivitive as are several of Frederick Loewe's less openly plugged numbers. "God's Green World," for instance. "You Haven't Changed At All," "My Love Is a Married Man," and, most winning of all, "A Jug of Wine." These, you'll be hearing quite a bit of.

In a large cast of fine and fresh young song-and-dancers, Irene Manning is a somewhat different heroine, Bill Johnson is a somewhat different hero, John Archer is a somewhat different tired-businessman-husband, and Tom Helmore is a more than somewhat different blase comedian. Watch this Helmore fellow!

At the same time, but in a different manner of writing, Anthony Tudor's dances are often arty and contrived; Robert Davidson's sets are often original and zestful; Miles White's costumes are often colorful and satiric. The orchestra, under Maurice Abravanel, is always superior...A pretty, nice show, "The Day Before Spring."

****

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

NOVEMBER 23, 1945

By HOWARD BARNES

Sometimes Gay

A POLITE new musical has come to the National. "The Day Before Spring" is melodious, smartly caparisoned and some times gay. It is to be commended for its lack of pretensions, but before it completes its course through two acts of a slight and brittle book a bit of genuine rowdiness would be extremely welcome. As it is, this John C. Wilson production remains too unruffled to inspire much enthusiasm. There are engaging principals, particularly Tom Helmore and Patricia Marshall; several of the songs are fresh and amusingly lyrical, and there is a nice interweaving of the musical numbers and the libretto. On the comic side, the show is wanting.

* * *

The author, Arthur Jay Lerner, has taken a simple triangle and embellished it with everything from college songs to dream ballets. The heroine returns with her husband to a tenth reunion, where she meets an old flame who has been dedicating his lost love to romantic novels. After consulting Plato, Voltaire and Freud in a college corridor, she determines to rearrange her life, but a second elopement proves as feckless as the first. This tenuous thread of a plot is strung on well mannered chit-chat, vocal arrangements and a couple of ballets. The latter are assayed below by Mr. Terry, saving this reviewer any impolite adjectives.

* * *

As for the chit-chat and the songs, they are a shade on the unexciting side. Helmore has the best lines, as a cynical companion of the novelist and he makes the most of them. His easy delivery gives the piece its wittiest and most agreeable moments. Miss Marshall sings slightly suggestive songs with a definite air. She is especially good in the number called "A Jug of Wine." Frederick Loewe has done his best composing for her, for she has another infectious number in "My Love Is a Married Man." The title song is another tune which should claim considerable attention in the immediate future.

* * *

John Archer, Irene Manning and Bill Johnson interpret the triangle with less support from the material than they deserve. Archer is excellent as a contented husband who cannot believe that his wife could fall for the novelist's romantic mating calls. In the later role Miss Manning is decoratively bewildered and Bill Johnson out-Hemingways Heminway as the writing fellow. There are elusive bits of satire in "The Day Before Spring," given their full effect by the company. Unfortunately there is too little fun in the musical. With the tasteful settings by Robert Davison and Wilson's expert staging, lots more of a show might have been presented at the National Theater.

The New York Times

NOVEMBER 23, 1945.

THE PLAY

By LEWIS NICHOLS

"The Day Before Spring" is a likable musical show in a good many ways, if not quite in enough of them for a fully satisfactory evening. It is good to hear cheerful music again, sung by agreeable people and played by an orchestra whose members obviously belong to the same union. It also is good to see a production that is smart, that has been put together with care and integrity. But after that, it is the same old story—"The Day Before Spring" is an extremely long day. It trudged along without comedy, without literary sparkle or dance sparkle, it is, in short, heavy. With a good basic idea, it declines to take advantage of its possibilities.

* * *

The story is of a class reunion, when a woman who has been married ten years again comes upon the man with whom she once started to elope. Over the stage is a quotation from Dumas: "The chain of wedlock is so heavy it takes two to carry it, sometimes three." Open to Albert Jay Lerner, who wrote the book, were various approaches—the whimsical, the sardonic, the Conrad-in-quest-of-his-youth. Mr. Lerner, however, has chosen to be austere rather than light, although at the start there are indications he once planned irony. As it stands, the woman again starts to elope, but is talked out of it, mainly with the illustration of ballet, which is formal also.

Musical comedy books have a fierce reputation by this time, but the slow quality of that of "The Day Before Spring" drags down a good deal of nice material with it. Frederick Loewe has written some very pleasant tunes, and Irene Manning, Bill Johnson, John Archer and Patricia Marshall know how to sing them. But the spaces between notes are too great, and as his director as well as producer, John C. Wilson has permitted entry to certain things not belonging in his adult shows. There is, for example, a song by the statues, or shades, of Plato, Voltaire and Freud which belongs strictly to Mr. Wilson's salad days. A drinking song, which might do better under other circumstances, seems just a bit juvenile where it is.

The dances are by Antony Tudor, and the informal ones are unpretentious and easy. The two ballets are another story, however. They illustrate the thoughts of the old beau and of his secretary-valet-handyman. They tell nothing new, they supply no mood; as ballets they seem to be moments set apart and unto themselves. Their chief performers are Hugh Laing and Mary Ellen Moylan. In the department of humor, there is Tom Helmore—as the secretary—who is amusing when he has opportunity, and for various minor roles there are good players. Being a production precisionist, Mr. Wilson has demanded of Miles White some of his better costumes, and from Robert Davison completely satisfactory settings. But, like wedlock, "The Day Before Spring" takes more than it has to fully carry it.

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1946 SUBSCRIPTION YEAR

January 1, 1946 to December 31, 1946

"Marriage Is for Single People"

The New York Times

NOVEMBER 22, 1945

Scat

By LEWIS NICHOLS

If "Marriage Is For Single People" was put on to test the adult nervous system, well, two-thirds of last evening's audience at the Cort passed with flying colors. The rest went early, but those who remained need never be afraid of or surprised at anything again. There were indications at the start of the night that Stanley Richards' comedy might turn into something for the connoisseur, but it was not until near the end that it reached its full, lush richness. When Mr. Richards takes the cover off his typewriter again, it can only be to write a better play, for one direction alone remains to him.

"Marriage Is For Single People" is about an antic playwright who sends a country girl to his home as his fiancee. She wins a prize at some sort of a glamour contest in a glamour night club; she captures the hearts of a movie he-man and a movie executive. Finally, she marries the younger brother of the playwright and, attractive in blue dirndle, decides he must go to work, hard work, of course, and not the kind he had been used to. Carrying on in these morbid proceedings are Anne Francine (as Hollywood gossip columnist), Nana Bryant (mother of playwright, named, incidentally Sibyl Hecuba), Robert Sully (movie actor), Nancie Hobbes (comic maid), Gertrude Beach (girl from country). The acting is on par with the direction, and that is on par with the play. Everything is on the same level, at least.

New York World-Telegram

NOVEMBER 22, 1945

Sideshow Farce Presented at Cort.

By BURTON RASCOE

Ruth Holden and Virginia Kronberg got a concession at the Cort and produced a sideshow there Wednesday night called "Marriage Is for Single People."

After the first showing it would take W. C. Fields as the barker to lure the suckers in. Once inside they wouldn't stay long—not, by two acts—enough to see the payoff, an actress undressed as a Bali native with a Dache hat, saying to her Park Ave. mother-in-law, "Me Goona. You Mama."

Word is about that the author, Stanley Richards, is a Hollywood script writer. It would seem more likely that he was once the scenario writer for Huber's Flea Circus. The trouble with this script is that it has words in it and requires human actors. . . . Since this freak show probably will disband very quickly, I shall not embarrass any of the worthy actors by reminding readers that they had jobs in it.

PM

EXCLUSIVE

NOVEMBER 22, 1945

—Kronenberger—

An Eye-Witness Reviews the Crime

PM Reviews

Decidedly, *Marriage Is for Single People* is not one of the things to be thankful for on this solemn morn. In fact, if the morn were any less solemn I might get rather coarse about the proceedings at the Cort last night. They took place in a penthouse apartment of this city, and concerned an ingenuous maid from the Fresno vineyards who wowed everybody in sight except the audience. For sheer dreadfulness, Mr. Richards' comedy is at least six steps down from *The Girl From Nantucket*, not to seek any more historical comparisons. And dreadful as the play is, it has almost found a cast and director to match it. From time to time, when a performer exited, there was a mild flurry of applause — an interesting but, come to think of it, not illogical method of cheering him for leaving the stage.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

'MARRIAGE IS FOR SINGLE PEOPLE.'

"Marriage Is for Single People," play by Stanley Richards; staging by Stanley Logan; setting by Frederick Fox; presented by Ruth Holden and Virginia Kronberg at the Cort Theatre, Wednesday, November 21, 1945. The cast:

Mrs. Sibyl Hecuba	Nana Bryant
Lily Packer	Florence Sundstrom
Reena Rowe	Anne Francine
Cynthia Murdock	Marguerite Lewis
Dudley Packer	Frank Otto
Kenneth Hecuba	Joel Marston
Una, a maid	Nancie Hobbes
Lottie Dinenhower	Gertrude Beach
Spencer Shilling	Robert Sully
An Expressman	Sherman Lazarus
Reginald Hecuba	Nicholas Saunders
A Young Lady	Vivian Mallah

New York Post

NOVEMBER 23, 1945

'Marriage Is for Single People'

By WILELLA WALDORF

The Cort Theatre opened its doors Wednesday night to a punk little comedy entitled "Marriage Is for Single People," by Stanley Richards, a playwright who apparently fancies himself a wit. The scene was a New York penthouse apartment frequented by a weird collection of improbable people including a simple young woman from the vineyards of Fresno, Cal., with whom all the males fell in love. Although one or two of the players seemed to be making a genuine effort to get some sort of sense out of the script, the acting generally was on a par with the writing.

The Sun

NOVEMBER 23, 1945

THE CORT'S MISHAP.

By WARD MOREHOUSE

It's quite possible that I may be overlooking an item or two but it's my impression that nothing so unforgivably inept as "Marriage Is for Single People" has come to Broadway since "Hairpin Harmony" achieved a run of twenty-four hours. The new comedy opened Wednesday evening at the Cort. That playhouse owes theatergoers an apology.

Stanley Richards is the author of "Marriage Is for Single People." Ruth Holden and Virginia Kronberg are the producers. Stanley Logan is the director. And several people who have actually been on the stage before are playing parts. The acting is worse than you've ever seen in the seediest of summer theaters. It would be sheer brutality to mention names.

If you're somehow asked what "Marriage Is for Single People" was all about just say that it had something to do with a not quite bright little girl of Fresno, Cal., who receives a proposal from a light-hearted playwright in naval uniform, just before he went overseas. She believes him, packs her belongings into a barrel, comes East, moves in with the family and eventually marries the young brother.

The new comedy arrived in 48th street after tryout performances before the all-too-trusting playgoers of such way stations as Norfolk and Richmond. If it stays at the Cort beyond Saturday night my name is Lew Dockstader.

W. M.

Journal American

NOVEMBER 23, 1945

New Comedy At the Cort

By ROBERT GARLAND

Night before last, which, outside the Cort Theatre, was the eve on which to be thankful, Ruth Holden and Virginia Kromberg presented "Marriage Is For Single People." A "new comedy" by Stanley Richards, Nana Bryant was the featured player, Stanley Logan was the accredited director, Frederick Fox was responsible for the background.

The "action" took place in Reginald Hecuba's penthouse apartment on Manhattan. Getting under way during a Spring evening, on what was surely April Fools' Day, the tale Mr. Richards set out to tell went on until the afternoon of the second day later. For every reason I could think of, it seemed longer.

Coming to Miss Bryant's support were Anne Francine, Florence Sunstrom, Margaret Lewis, Nancie Hobbes, Vivian Mallah, Gertrude Beach, Frank Otto, Joel Marston, Robert Sully, Sherman Lazarus and Nicholas Saunders. Reading from left to right, or from right to left, they were just what "Marriage Is For Single People" deserved.

To give credits where credits were claimed, the scenery was built by Nolan and painted by Triangle; the sound equipment was furnished by Masque and the electrical equipment by Duwico; the flowers were picked by Universal and the shoes were cobbled by Saks; Miss Bryant's first-act gown was run up by Bonwit and Miss Bryant's second-act suit was run down by Sloan.

On the other hand, Miss Lewis' first-act gown was created by Sydel and Miss Lewis' second-act costume was made possible by Dana. And so it went, with hats by Lenesta, make-up by Charles, jewels by Coro, daytime bags by Coblenz, night-time bags by Joseph, gloves by Wear-Rite, company management by Jorgensen, theatre deodorizing by Creco.

However, the management was not responsible for patrons' personal apparel unless checked with a theatre attendant, while customers were urged to take their wraps with them when they left their seats and reminded that the nearest exit indicated by a red light was the quickest way to 45th st. On Thanksgiving Eve, this last was grand advice to follow.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

NOVEMBER 22, 1945

By Otis L. Guernsey Jr.

"Turkey" for Thanksgiving

A NEW farce has staggered into town, and it lies where it fell, on the stage of the Cort Theater. "Marriage Is for Single People" shuffles several women around with several men in one of those smart New York penthouse drawing rooms, but it develops almost no humor at all out of the exchange of sweethearts and lines. From a woman motion-picture columnist to a Gotham playboy, all of the Stanley Richards characters are uncontrolled burlesques of the types they are supposed to represent. Their witless conversation tears the fabric of the comedy to shreds.

* * *

Everybody calls everybody else "darling" in this piece about the Hecuba family, who have Hollywood connections and who have a dame-loving playwright of a son in the Navy. One of the girls to whom he has made promises, a sweet young thing from the vineyards of Fresno, Calif., arrives at the family's sky palace to wait for the sailor, just as the Hecubas are trying to close a big deal with a Hollywood producer. The sophisticates toss cracks at her between cocktails, but she manages to charm them all silly. The plot then winds through a series of romantic upsets, all on the level of intelligence of one of the girls in this play, who accuses her fiance of unfaithfulness after he has merely run up and down stairs to bring the visiting Californian a bite to eat.

* * *

There are a few comedy values in this conflict between a girl from the country and a group of tailored city-dwellers, but they are lost among the failing attempts at cleverness in the dialogue of this play. Nana Bryant as Mrs. Hecuba, Anne Francine as the columnist who likes gin and exclusives and Gertrude Beach as the bucolic lass work hard to make occasional sense of their material, but the other actors are either hopelessly lost in their roles or obviously uneasy on the Broadway stage. The direction either allows the actors to explode all over the action, as in the case of two of the film types, or racks them up like cordwood on the handsome furniture. The latter style is the most appropriate, since "Marriage Is for Single People" is very wooden theater indeed.

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DAILY NEWS

NOVEMBER 22, 1945

'Marriage Is for Single People' Is Merely Awful in a Childish Way

By JOHN CHAPMAN

After a prolonged bout with the brain, I have thought of something nice to say about "Marriage Is for Single People," a comedy which opened at the Cort last night. I predict that it will be one of the most successful tax losses of the season.

The play must have had investors, because any production must have investors to reach Broadway. It does not necessarily have to have a script with words in it, but, as my pal Moonbeam would so quaintly phrase it, it's gotta have tha dough on tha line.

This money is easy to come by, for practically everybody would rather become a limited partner than be listed in the Social Register or be known personally to a head waiter. An investment counselor was telling me last evening, no later than dinner time, how it works. "If," he explained, "you have a 100% loss you make money."

"Marriage Is for Single People" is not bad enough to be scolded. It is merely awful in a childish way. It is about a country girl who comes to the big city and conquers it with her charm, her innocence and her home-made frocks. Stanley Richards, of Hollywood, wrote it. Stanley Logan, of Hollywood, directed it, Nana Bryant, of Hollywood, is in it.

Good old Hollywood! I wish it would go back to where it came from. I am sorry that Miss Bryant, a capable actress who used to be on the stage herself once, has had to be involved in it—and I think she acted last night as though she were sorry, too.

In more ways than one, Hollywood and its slumming players are becoming the drama's second biggest handicap. The biggest is the Treasury Department's collector of internal revenue. If he could just figure out how people could make some money without having to show a 100% loss, the stage might be reclaimed by professionals who know how to run it.

"A Sound of Hunting"

The New York Times

NOVEMBER 21, 1945

THE PLAY

By LEWIS NICHOLS

For a first play—indeed for any play—"A Sound of Hunting" has a good deal to be said in its favor. As was the case in his book, "A Walk in the Sun," Harry Brown is discussing the war. He is speaking in the terms and the language of the average enlisted man, avoiding for the most part the playwriting heroics which have plagued many another drama. He writes even and often extremely amusing dialogue, and his people would be good ones to have about—in the town of Cassino or anywhere. But as it opened last evening at the Lyceum Theatre, "A Sound of Hunting" seemed to lack that additional substance that would make it a fully satisfactory two hours.

* * *

Perhaps it is that Mr. Brown and his players are too glib for their story. Once the stage has been set and the characters have been identified, nothing much happens, nothing at all happens which cannot be foreseen. The characters sit around in their shell-ruined house, discussing Naples, women and each others' bad points, and it is inevitable that they grow repetitious. An audience, even admiring the talk as it does, may easily become restless at the same line. The action does not build; most of the vital occurrences take place off stage, and Mr. Brown does not quite get over his point that men of the same platoon feel a love for one another which they can feel for no one else. His leading character especially appears to do what he does as an individual, not as a member of the platoon.

The story is simple. A group of men for days have been in Cassino, hoping for leave back of the front line. During a patrol one of the members is caught between the German and American Armies and the platoon tries to rescue him. There are orders that they shall not go out, but some of them do so, only to fail. Finally, a private who had been told to take an objectionable war correspondent for a walk, goes by himself to wipe out a machine gun and later finds the missing soldier dead. The rest of the platoon starts back for Naples.

* * *

Sam Levene is the soldier who finally eliminates the enemy gun, and is also the soldier with Mr. Brown's best lines. He delivers these excellently and with a good swagger, but the author is guilty of starting him as one sort of character and ending him as another. In a play whose virtue is the lack of heroics, Mr. Brown permits one at the end. Among the other members of the company, Frank Lovejoy plays the role of a soldier who has gone slightly "trigger happy"; George Tyne is a wry Pfc., and Carl Frank is a sergeant who might have been an officer but wished to remain with his companions. Mr. Brown has made the war correspondent a man who looks for the story only to line his own pocketboook, and the caricature is not a very good one. Samuel Leve's setting of a broken room is well done.

"A Sound of Hunting"

A new play by Harry Brown. Presented by Irving L. Jacobs last night at the Lyceum Theatre. Directed by Anthony Brown. Setting by Samuel Leve.

THE CAST

Pfc. Charles Cole	Frank Lovejoy
Pfc. John Hunter	James McOrew
Pvt. Dino Colluci	Sam Levene
T/3 Frank Dassert	William Beal
Lt. Allan Crane	Charles J. Flynn
S/Sgt. Joseph Mooney	Burton Lancaster
Pfc. Saul Shapiro	George Tyne
Pfc. Karl Muller	Kenneth Brauer
Sgt. Thomas Carter	Carl Frank
Pfc. Morris Ferguson	Ralph Brooks
Capt. John Trelawny	Stacy Harris
Frederick Finley	Bruce Evans

New York Post

NOVEMBER 21, 1945

'A Sound of Hunting'— The War Minus Heroics

By Wilella Waldorf

"A Sound of Hunting," the new play by Harry Brown produced last night at the Lyceum Theatre, is a study in modern warfare that manages to maintain a surprising amount of valid theatrical interest, although there is much talk, little action and a minimum of heroics. Mr. Brown is the author of two books about the war, "A Walk in the Sun" and "Artie Greengroin, sPfc." "A Sound of Hunting" is his first play and in it he does a commendable job of getting over to those of us who stayed at home something of what it meant to slog away in the infantry for days, weeks, months, years until time, and even war, ceased to mean much any more.

There is nothing very noble or heroic about the war the men are fighting at the Lyceum. True, they risk their lives regularly on patrol, but life to them has come to mean mainly cold, K Rations, monotony and mud. A squad of eight holding a position in one of the ruins of Cassino, with a German machine gun nest across the way, is about to move out after seventeen days when Small, one of their number, gets cut off on his way in and can't make it.

Small never was much of a soldier and his plight is pretty much his own fault, but this has been a "lucky squad" in a company of terrible casualties. Forbidden by their captain to go out after him, the men can't rest without doing something about Small. A visiting war correspondent who scents a stirring feature story in the set-up tries to put it all on a "three cheers for our unsung heroes" basis and succeeds in making the whole outfit sicker than its K Rations.

Sam Levene Returns

"A Sound of Hunting" could be called a play about wartime comradeship except that such a description would probably elicit rude noises from Pvt. Dino Collucci of New York's Bleecker Street, its cheeriest and most endearing character. As played with relish by Sam Levene (back on the stage after five years in Hollywood) Collucci is a very real figure and also a very diverting one.

He is the spark plug that keeps the play from running down and it is only when he is offstage for a spell in the third act that the interest palls a bit. The final flourish in which Collucci captures the German machine gun nest single-handed isn't too convincing, but even this episode is handled without disturbing heroics.

The men in "A Sound of Hunting" don't go around calling one another "My buddy," spouting poetry or making speeches for the history books. They don't think much about what they're fighting for either. But they've been through tough spots together for a long time and when one of them gets in a jam the others just don't feel right until they have a try at getting him out. You can't make a Rover Boy story out of it and Mr. Brown obviously has only contempt for those who try.

Anthony Brown has directed with due attention to realistic detail. Samuel Leve's setting is an effective ruin and Mr. Levene is assisted by a good company—all male, of course. The only females in the play are those occasionally described by Pvt. Collucci, whose wartime conquests among the ladies are more prodigious than his feats of valor on the battlefield.

PM Exclusive

NOVEMBER 21, 1945

Kronenberger

The Sound Is A Little Faint

PM Reviews

In a season when the critic has mostly just reached for the sledgehammer or the flit-gun, it is something for him to be working again with a pair of scales. Harry Brown's play about the war is good enough to be carefully weighed even if, as I think, it is ultimately found wanting. The merits it has are sharp and ingratiating. For a first play, moreover, it shows surprising ease in the handling of its material, and in largely overcoming a difficulty that has given many a practiced playwright gray hairs—namely, of maintaining audience-interest with a minimum of action. The author of *A Walk in the Sun* has not fallen short from a lack of craft. But I think he has fallen short from a lack of substance, a lack of emotional significance.

Mr. Brown is concerned with the life of a squad of American soldiers at Cassino. Through weeks of tough fighting the squad has remained intact; now, on the day when it is to be relieved and sent back of the lines, one of the eight men gets trapped under fire. From slight feelings of superstition but far stronger ones of comradeship, his fellows don't want to go off without him; and the remainder of the play consists in their efforts to rescue him.

• • •

That's all the "story" there is in *A Sound of Hunting;* yet, slight and unproductive of real drama though it is, it somehow manages to keep the thing, as a play, from falling apart. Moreover, it gives Mr. Brown every chance to convey the community life of his squad and to portray its members as human beings. It equally provides Mr. Brown with the right fable for expressing the theme of his play—which is the special emotion that welds a group of soldiers together, the *mystique* of comradeship.

With his community picture, Mr. Brown is successful. The picture has life and a certain vividness. Mr. Brown has an ear for GI talk, a talent for GI humor. Its humor, indeed, is the best thing about *A Sound of Hunting.* When he is dealing with soldiers at a behavioristic level, Mr. Brown interests and in general convinces you. Even when he brings them up against a self-seeking war correspondent, though the correspondent himself seems etched in too-resentful vitriol, the heat that is generated, the sparks that fly, are genuine enough. But it is really at only a behavioristic level that *A Sound of Hunting* comes through. As individual portraits Mr. Brown's men are, with one exception, merely sketches. And the exception, a lazy, wisecracking, skirt-chasing Italian-American who is drawn full length, seems to me only a partial success. What he says is often amusing enough; but as a character he never achieves the real comic richness, the real human vitality, that Mr. Brown was trying for. As a character, indeed, he is even a little tiresome.

• • •

But where *A Sound of Hunting* falls short far more crucially is in not adequately explaining or communicating that special sense of comradeship that is the point of the slender "plot" and the theme of the play. It was obviously something that GIs felt and could not articulate; and it was for Mr. Brown to express what they found inexpressible. He has tried. But he has not snared it, he has merely sentimentalized it. And by never crystallizing the soldier's emotion, *A Sound of Hunting* lacks a genuine emotion of its own. The weakness of the play is not its lack of external action, but its lack of authentic internal feeling.

This being so, perhaps it is not unfair to say that *A Sound of Hunting* comes too late. A work of art, or something approaching one, dwells outside the sphere of timeliness; indeed, were *A Sound of Hunting* anything approaching a work of art, it would be a critic's particular duty to insist that it should not be slighted just because we may now be rather fed up with war literature. But *A Sound of Hunting,* being what it is, really needed the war itself to achieve sufficient impact. Today it has not much impact; only some qualities of entertainment.

The production is very competent but not at all brilliant. Sam Levene plays the wisecracking private with liveliness and skill, but doesn't quite bring him home as a person. There are attractive performances by Frank Lovejoy, Burton Lancaster, Carl Frank, Bruce Evans and others; and Mr. Brown's direction has a good deal of life to it. —Louis Kronenberger

New York World-Telegram

NOVEMBER 21, 1945

By Burton Rascoe

'A Sound of Hunting' a Sardonic Tragi-Comedy

"A Sound of Hunting," by Harry Brown, which opened at the Lyceum last night, is a war play. But don't let that mislead you. It is not in the least like any of the war plays we have been getting on the stage, in the movies and over the radio these last four years or more.

In fact, we had to wait for five years after the last war, until Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings wrote "What Price Glory?", to get a play as virile, as naturalistic, as exciting and as entertaining as "A Sound of Hunting." And, although the humor of Harry Brown's play is sardonic, the dialogue in it is wittier, more uninhibited and infinitely funnier than in "What Price Glory?"

Against Tragic Background.

Happily the chief comic role is entrusted to Sam Levene, who returns to Broadway after five years in Hollywood. From the days of "Three Men on a Horse," Mr. Levene has steadily demonstrated that he was tailored for the role of the wisecracking, griping, bragging, Private Colluci of "A Sound of Hunting." He is ably abetted by what in vaudeville would be called his stooge, George Tyne, and by the six others who might be called his straight men — Frank Lovejoy, James McGrew, Ralph Brooke, William Beal, Burton Lancaster and Kenneth Bauer.

In a way, the first two acts of "A Sound of Hunting" would sound like a cleverly contrived vaudeville comedy skit, if the background weren't so tragically serious. The provocations for Mr. Levene's quips, lampoons, jibes and clowning are the fatigue, boredom, apprehension and disgust with war of a squad of American infantrymen detained for 17 days in a war-ruined house in a dreary Italian town in winter rain and cold. It is an outfit of seasoned, battle-toughened men, but they keep their fibers tough by beefing, by flaring up at one another in anger, and in kidding.

The play tells of how a squad, upon hearing the outfit is to move back one night, defies orders and seeks to rescue one of their men who has been trapped when the others on night patrol made a dash for safety.

The missing one is only a poor, dumb, bespectacled former insurance salesman who had volunteered and had never been a good soldier, though an eager one. The squad had survived intact throughout the Italian campaign in which there had been extremely heavy casualties in the regiment. . . . There is deep suspence in the third act, when the action turns from clowning to serious business and the climax is ironic and powerfully effective, because so remote from formula.

Never So Effective.

The situation has been used many times since James B. Wharton's "Squad," which was about an American Army unit in the Italian campaign of the last war; but on the stage it has never been used with an effect at once as entertaining, as comical, and as touching as in "A Sound of Hunting."

The casting is excellent throughout and besides those mentioned above special honors should go to Stacy Harris and Charles J. Flynn. Anthony Brown has directed the play smoothly and has seen to it that the men are made up realistically with real mud bespattering them and with whiskers and grime.

Some of the theatrical devices, such as the slice of cake left for the missing man, are perhaps a bit too contrived, and Mr. Levene's final display of casual heroism is melodramatic hocus-pocus that is rather hard to take and even borders upon burlesque. But the play is a poet's view of war in terms of a tragi-comedy that runs from farce to profound sentiment; it is never namby-pamby or a recruiting poster (as so many war plays have been). The audience last night was an enthusiastic one.

Journal American

NOVEMBER 21, 1945

'A Sound of Hunting' Premieres at Lyceum

By ROBERT GARLAND

Last Summer, weekending in the country, I came across a copy of Harry Brown's "Poems: 1941-1944" on my bedside table. A poem was marked; a poem entitled "Incident on a Front Not Far from Castel de Sangro."

Underscored were lines beginning, "There was a sound of hunting in the mountains, that came back dark and dangerous to the ears of those who crouched among the broken fountains—"

Well, the poem went on to tell the brief and brittle story that was acted last night at the Lyceum, the "incident" that takes place in a ruined house in the town of Cassino, Italy, on the morning, afternoon and evening of a January day in the Year of Our Lord, 1944. Nothing of moment has been added. Nothing of moment save three acts of dialogue ringing with reality.

Poet turned playwright, quitting, for reasons of his own, the library for the theatre, Harry Brown has composed a comedy about a tragedy in which nine enlisted men, two officers and one war correspondent - to - end - all - war - correspondents held a first-night audience in the hollow of their voices by the comic-tragedy of the things they said and the tragic-comedy of the things they left untold.

* * *

Lucky Squad

All right, then. Admitting that "A Sound of Hunting" is an "incident," just as its poet-playwright says, the new tenant of the Lyceum can have my vote for the best play dealing with World War II until a better play dealing with World War II comes to claim it. One uneventfully eventful day in the war-scarred lives of these 12 American men-in-uniform is drama enough for me.

Above, beneath and around the edgy reactions of the 12 men in uniform—these nine enlisted men, two officers and one war-correspondent-to-end-all-war-correspondents — is the story of one man-in-uniform who isn't ever there. His name is Small; he is the "little guy with glasses" who, in his fateful stumbling way, completes Sgt. Mooney's "lucky squad of iron men."

"A Sound of Hunting" sets out to tell how Pvt. Small gets lost in a routine day of advancing and retreating; how Pvt. Small becomes the life and death concern of his every fellow doughfoot; how Pvt. Small fails to return for the slice of fruit-cake Pfc. Muller's sister baked back in America and sent to her brother soldiering overseas. That's all there is. There isn't any more.

* * *

Mostly Comedy

Why should there be? IF, in dialogue ringing with reality, Harry Brown can reveal the bravery and fear, the love and hate, the past, the present and the future of his twelve good men and bad, there is no need for plotting, planning and Broadway make-believe.

As it stands, there're life and death, excitement and suspense, comedy and tragedy, in "A Sound of Hunting." Mostly there is comedy.

The acting is supreme. Sam Levene, as Pvt. Dino Collucci, late of Bleecker st., Manhattan, is, to coin a word, superb. Five years in Hollywood have harmed him not at all. Frank Lovejoy, as Pfc. Charlie Coke, plays flawlessly into his assured artistry. Burton Lancaster, as S/Sgt. Joseph Mooney, is the non-com every private prays for. Kenneth Brauer, as Pfc. Karl Muller, is as he should be.

In a month of premieres you'll not meet a more gifted group of players than the group of players Irving Jacobs has assembled to do honor to our poet-playwright's dramatization of his own poetic incident. Only the war-correspondent - to - end - all-war-correspondents of Bruce Evans is unhappily out of drawing...To "A Sound of Hunting" I say "Yes," although I wish I could be sure the Lyceum's box-office will agree.